

SUMMER 2017

WEEK TWO

The Groundwork of Perseverance



OPENING QUESTION

Did you like to build as a kid? What did you like to build?

SCRIPTURE

Read Ezra 3:8-11, 4:1-5, 4:23-5:2, Haggai 1:2-8

DISCUSS

The big idea behind Sunday's sermon was this: **Temple-builders persevere. Home builders pull away.**

After work started in Jerusalem, God's people bumped into a problem: local resistance. The work of building for God got underway, but there were locals who wanted nothing of it. Eventually, the resistance became so great that the Jews stopped work on God's house and instead started working on their own.

>> Why was it important for the returned exiles to build the Temple? How does that relate to us today? Why was the Temple such a big deal? Why is the new temple such a big deal?

Ezra 4:1-5 talk about the problems the exiles bumped into. Locals who couldn't co-opt the work of the Jews turned to more direct measures to stop the building. But why? Who knows ... power, the preservation of the *status quo*. But this is clear: there will always be resistance to building the church and making disciples.

>> How have you personally experienced resistance in your pursuit of Christ? What has been your response?

Temple builders persevere. Or, at least they should. These builders, however, didn't. The resistance became so great that they decided to start building their own homes instead of God's house. This is an amazing transformation: at the beginning of chapter 3 they were as one man with one purpose: build the church. Just a few verses later and they've traded in God's work for their own. They pulled away from God's mission.

>> How have you been tempted to pull away from God's work in the world? What comforts draw you away from the hard work of persevering with Jesus for his Kingdom?

Gratefully, God sent two prophets, Haggai and Zechariah, to rebuke and encourage God's people to get back to work on God's house. God knew that simply serving themselves would never truly satisfy His people. His people are made to be satisfied in Him, not in His things.

>> Read Haggai 1:2-8. Can you identify with the rebuke of the prophet? How does this Scripture impact you right now? What are you going to do about it?

Reading Ezra can be a bit depressing, and also a bit convicting. But, depression and conviction aren't enough to change us. For that, we need grace and truth. Jesus came and persevered through great resistance in order to build God's new temple – the Church. Never having a home of his own, he laid his life down so that he could invite us to dwell with him in his future home. This is the home ever temple points to: the presence of God with us.

>> If it's true that Temple-builders persevere and home-builders pull away, how does Jesus embody that? How is it possible to live as home-builders because of the gospel?

>> What is one action step you need to take right now to see this reality birthed in your life? Is it reflection? Repentance? Take a moment to consider how you're going to apply this truth to your life.

PRAY

Pray for perseverance in this season of our church's life.